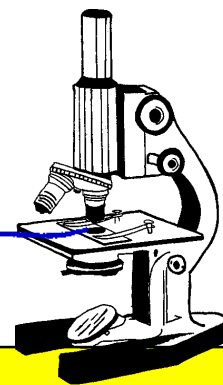


**A CURRENT  
EDUCATIONAL  
BULLETIN FOR  
SUBMITTING LAW  
ENFORCEMENT  
AGENCIES**

*A Closer Examination From The Benchtop...*

# UNDER<sup>the</sup>SCOPE



**MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL • CRIME LABORATORY DIVISION**

**PHONE: 573-526-6134  
FAX: 573-751-9922**

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## Safe Evidence Packaging of Sharps

The employees of the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Laboratory consider laboratory safety an extremely critical and serious topic. Our safety program begins with evidence submission and is carried throughout all aspects of lab analysis. Recently, the lab employees identified one particular deficit to our safety program that involves our submitting agencies: evidence packaging of sharp items. When evidence that is submitted to the laboratory is packaged in an unsafe manner, not only are the employees of the lab at risk for injury, but so is everyone outside of the lab who may come into contact with that package.

Several types of evidence, such as syringes, knives, glass, tools, or nails, are potentially hazardous. Even a glass blood tube could become a hazard if broken during routine handling of a package. The problem arises when these types of evidence are placed in a paper or plastic bag, since items could easily protrude through the packaging. This not only results in a loss of evidence, but potential injury to employees, such as accidental exposure to diseases and hazardous substances. Keep in mind that the package passes through many hands during routine submission, storage, and processing. By the time it is returned to the submitting agency, the packaging may be in very poor condition and unsafe.

Due to this safety concern, the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Laboratory is issuing a new packaging requirement for sharps-type evidence. The lab will no longer accept improperly packaged sharp items in paper or plastic bags. These items **MUST** be submitted in containers designated specifically for sharp items, which include boxes, plastic tubes, or any other puncture resistant material. If sharps-type evidence comes to the lab with unsafe packaging, the submitting individual will be asked to repackage the evidence. If the submitting individual is not the one who seized the evidence, chain of custody issues may

arise. Therefore, proper packaging is crucial before laboratory submission.

There are many vendors who are able to assist you in complying with this new requirement. Lab Safety Supply (800-356-0783) has a large selection of sharps-safe packaging materials. Consolidated Plastics (800-362-1000) also has a wide variety of box sizes and packing material.

Please remember that this change is made to protect any individual who may come into contact with any sharp item, as well as to ensure the integrity of the evidence. If you should need further assistance, please contact the lab.



*These items of evidence were submitted to the lab improperly. The piece of glass (top) was placed in a paper bag with no other protection, and the sharp edge of the glass ripped and protruded through the bag. The knife (bottom) was in a plastic bag placed inside a paper evidence bag.*